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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 001201

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: DJIBOUTI UNDERSCORES NEED FOR WEAPONS FOR TFG
TROOPS BEING TRAINED

REF: 09 STATE 103664

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CLASSIFIED BY: Eric Wong, DCM, U.S. Department of State, U.S.
Embassy, Djibouti; REASON: 1.4(A), (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Djibouti's senior military leadership highlights the need to sustain the nearly 600 Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG) fighters being trained in Djibouti, once they return to Mogadishu after training in Djibouti ends o/a October 15. In particular, Djibouti's chief of defense and his deputy highlight the need for weapons and wages, so that the investment made in these forces is not squandered. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) DCM and DATT met on October 4 with Djibouti's chief of defense (CHOD) and deputy CHOD: Major General Fathi A. Hussein and Major General Zakaria Cheick Ibrahim, respectively. Embassy's Office of Security Cooperation (OSC) budget and training assistant provided Somali interpretation; Lieutenant Ibrahim Zakaria (MG Zakaria's son) served as FAD note-taker.

TFG TROOPS REQUIRE WAGES AND WEAPONS

¶3. (C) DATT informed the CHOD and deputy CHOD that the USG had decided to procure \$1.1 million in uniforms and equipment to support Somali TFG troops being trained in Djibouti. MG Fathi and Zakaria welcomed the announcement, but stressed the need to provide the more than 600 Somali TFG troops currently being trained in Djibouti (463 by the Djiboutian Armed Forces, and approximately 150 by the French forces in Djibouti) with other forms of sustainment, namely salaries and weapons. Without salaries and weapons, months of training troops in Djibouti would have been "a wasted effort," MG Zakaria declared,

noting that al-Shabaab fighters received material support quickly. Without sustainment, TFG trainees risked abandoning the TFG and "increasing the ranks of the fundamentalists", Zakaria said. Troops needed to be armed and equipped properly, before being returned to Somalia, he added. Some 600 Somali fighters had now been fed, trained, organized, and given leadership skills and esprit de corps in Djibouti; it was important to keep them on the

side of the TFG.

¶4. (C) DATT and DCM also noted that a sole TFG fighter, among the 463 being trained by Djibouti, could not be returned to Mogadishu by USG-contracted charter, due to vetting concerns. (NOTE. In a follow-up meeting with the Djiboutian military on October 11, Republic Guard commander COL Djama stated that he would simply manifest the fighter in question on a French-sponsored commercial flight, rather than have him use USG-funded transport. END NOTE.)

TRAINING EXTENDED TO ALLOW COMBINED TRAINING
OF DJIBOUTIAN- AND FRENCH-TRAINED FORCES

¶4. (C) MG Zakaria noted that Somali TFG President Sheikh Sharif shared this concern, and had specifically recommended during a September 8 visit with Djibouti's President Guelleh, that Djiboutian- and French-trained troops undergo a month of combined training together, in order to promote unit cohesion. Thus, TFG forces who had been initially scheduled to return to Somalia as early as September 15, were now undergoing additional combined training, with French-trained troops joining Djiboutian-trained

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troops at the FAD's military school at Hol Hol. Djibouti had organized the combined TFG forces into 6 companies, led by a TFG colonel, lieutenant colonel, and other non-commissioned officer-equivalents, Zakaria said. MG Fathi observed that the GODJ had lengthened the duration of TFG training in response to USG recommendations: France's 6-week training course was less than half the duration of Djibouti's, and unequal. On the other hand, Zakaria said, (without additional assistance) Djibouti could not afford to keep the TFG troops in Djibouti any longer than necessary, after training was completed. (NOTE. Djibouti is planning to host 1,300 troops from 10 countries for the EASBRIG field training exercise, or FTX, in mid-November, but advance elements are expected to arrive in Djibouti as early as October 20. END NOTE.)

¶5. (C) Citing the urgent situation in Mogadishu, MG Zakaria opined that Somalia represented "a new breeding ground for al-Qaida, next door to us." Sending TFG troops with "nothing" but uniforms was therefore insufficient. While Djibouti and the United States jointly faced common threats, Djibouti's shared border with Somalia meant that Djibouti was naturally more seized with the threat from al-Shabaab. (In response, DCM reviewed existing U.S. mil-mil engagement with Djibouti, and highlighted recent Congressional approval of several initiatives aimed at boosting Djibouti's security: including \$1.3 million in PKO funding to provide training and material to the counter-terrorist National Gendarmerie's Intervention Group (GIGN); and \$500,000 in NADR funding to refurbish a border control post at Loyada, along the Djibouti/Somaliland border.)

GROUND RADAR NEEDED TO MONITOR BORDERS

¶6. (C) While asserting that the situation along the Djibouti-Eritrean border was "under control", despite Eritrea's continued military occupation of Djiboutian territory at Ras Doumeira, MG Fathi appealed for the installation of ground radar units (possibly vehicle-mounted), every 5-10 km along the border, to help detect fighters infiltrating from Eritrea. Such ground radar units could also be used at the Somali-Djibouti border, Fathi said. (NOTE. Post supports a FY2010 Section 1206 proposal, submitted recently to AFRICOM, which may address this need for border surveillance. END NOTE.)

¶7. (C) In a subsequent meeting with deputy CHOD, MG Zakaria, on October 8, DCM and TDY Embassy Nairobi Somalia Unit officer informed Zakaria that the USG was informing the UN that it would provide uniforms and associated personal kit for up to 1,000 TFG forces; that some of this kit would be used to "back-fill" equipment provided by the GODJ to the first tranche of 463 Djibouti-trained fighters scheduled to complete training on October 15; and that Yemen may be able to provide weapons to the returned TFG fighters, once in Somalia. MG Zakaria, while expressing Djibouti's deep appreciation for USG support, reiterated the need to ensure that returned fighters received arms.

WONG